Kenilworth Avenue Corridor Plan

4.0

As discussed in Chapter 3, recommendations under Option 3 would be pursued to improve the corridor; where, Kenilworth Avenue would remain a limited access highway. Safety improvements would be made to portions of the corridor, and some portions would be depressed to improve connectivity across the roadway. Infrastructure improvements would be made across the corridor including at the key interchanges at East Capitol Street, Benning Road and Eastern Avenue, to improve the aging infrastructure, its visual character, and the vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems (see Figure 4.1)

Once the improvements are in place, the Kenilworth Avenue corridor will continue to function as a limited-access roadway, the character of which will vary between a parkway and a tree-lined expressway.

This chapter describes a corridor plan, which consists of three parts - the overall corridor design, the proposed vehicular circulation system, and the proposed pedestrian and bicycle circulation system. The corridor plan provides the broad policies and recommendations that are aimed to improve the Kenilworth Avenue Corridor. These policies and recommendations translate into individual projects that are summarized at the end of this chapter, and are discussed in further detail in Chapters 5 through 8 of this document.

Figure 4.1: Corridor Plan

4.1 Urban Design

The aim of this plan is to establish Kenilworth Avenue as an attractive urban corridor that threads through several of the District's distinct neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River, and extends the visual character established by the Baltimore Washington Parkway to the north to connect with the Anacostia Freeway to the south. The design decisions and implementing strategies that provide a framework to achieve the beautification of the corridor are described below.

Strengthen the Parkway Setting between Pennsylvania Avenue and East Capitol Street

Between Pennsylvania Avenue and East Capitol Street, Kenilworth Avenue borders a park on one side and a wide vegetated buffer area on the other. The corridor itself is a two-lane roadway with paved shoulders, landscaped edges and a median that varies from a narrow jersey barrier to wider vegetated areas. Also, nearly one-third of the corridor consists of an elevated structure. There is no pedestrian access along this segment of the roadway.

The following strategies are recommended to emphasize the parkway setting along this portion of the corridor:

- Improve maintenance of existing vegetation including removal of exotic and invasive species;
- Plant new vegetation at strategic locations to reinforce the landscape buffer, and to provide openings that frame views, including those of the Anacostia Park, the Anacostia Hills and portions of the City that are visible to the west of the river.

Figure 4.2: Corridor Beautification Framework Plan

- Replace the paved shoulder on the outside of the roadway with a grass shoulder and a mountable curb, and replace the paved shoulder on the inside with a green median to reduce the amount of visible pavement along the corridor and to improve the environmental footprint of the roadway.

- Continue the architectural treatment, such as embossed concrete walls, along the elevated or narrow portions of the corridor, similar to the recently improved New York Avenue crossings.

Revitalize the Corridor between East Capitol Street and Eastern Avenue with Streetscape Improvements

This stretch of the corridor has a more urban and inconsistent character. Neighborhoods abut the roadway on one side, with CSX railroad tracks and a buffer area, as well as some commercial development, on the other. The corridor is a three-lane roadway with limited shoulders and includes service lanes on either side for a significant portion of this stretch. This stretch of the corridor is also traversed by several bridge structures. Also, there are sidewalks that line the service lanes along this segment of the corridor.

The following strategies are recommended to establish a more consistent and aesthetically pleasing streetscape along this portion of the corridor:

- Add turf, shrubbery, and trees (where appropriate) between the service lanes and the mainline where the service lane width is reduced for traffic calming or safety purposes. This would reduce the amount of visible pavement and impervious surfaces along the corridor. Where there is space within the road right-of-way, add a green shoulder with a mountable curb at the outside of the mainline.

- Add new street trees at the outer edge of the road right-of-way to establish a consistent edge along the corridor. Extend the character/type of street trees that currently exists along the adjacent neighborhood streets to the new plantings.

- Introduce a planted median on the inside of the roadway to reduce the amount of visible pavement.

- Extend the existing landscaping character (or that proposed under the Great Streets Initiative) of roads crossing Kenilworth Avenue.

Establish a Unified Theme along the Corridor

While the corridor currently has two distinct segments within the study area, a unified theme of plantings and structural materials should be pursued throughout the corridor. These include the following strategies:

- Adopt a unified pattern of plantings, median design, shoulder design, lighting, signage, cross bridges, and elements, such as walls at the edge of elevated structures, that is carried through the entire corridor. Work with Maryland to extend this pattern to the Route 50 interchange to the north.

- At interchanges with cross streets, as well as along the corridor, introduce unique design elements or signage that promotes community identity by highlighting adjacent neighborhoods.

- Explore opportunities for public art throughout the corridor. Encourage school-age children and area residents to participate in creating art pieces that highlight the character and history of the area.

Figure 4.3: Proposed Kenilworth Avenue between Pennsylvania Avenue and South Capitol Street (Two-lane roadway with green shoulder and landscaped median. The green shoulders could be designed to retain stormwater during storm events.)

Figure 4.4: Proposed Kenilworth Avenue between East Capitol Street and Eastern Avenue (Three-lane roadway with landscaping between the mainline and service lanes, and a landscaped median.)

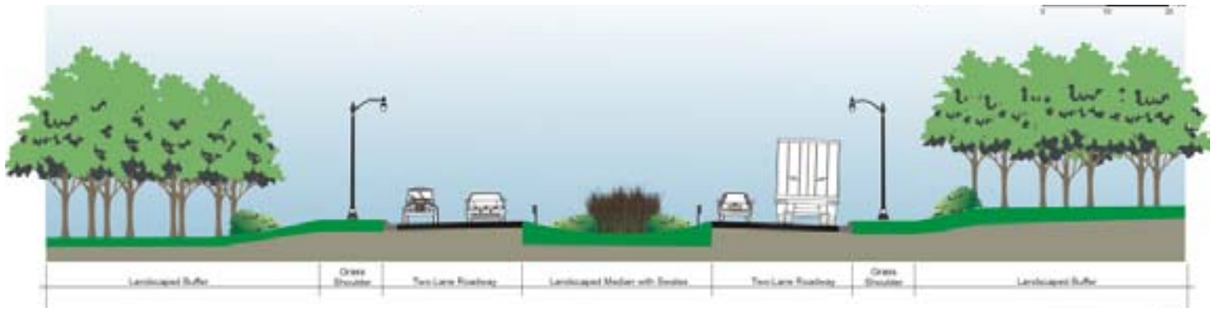

Figure 4.5: Cross-Section located between Pennsylvania Avenue and East Capitol Street (Two lane Kenilworth Avenue with green shoulder and landscaped median. The median and green shoulders could be designed to retain stormwater during storm events.)

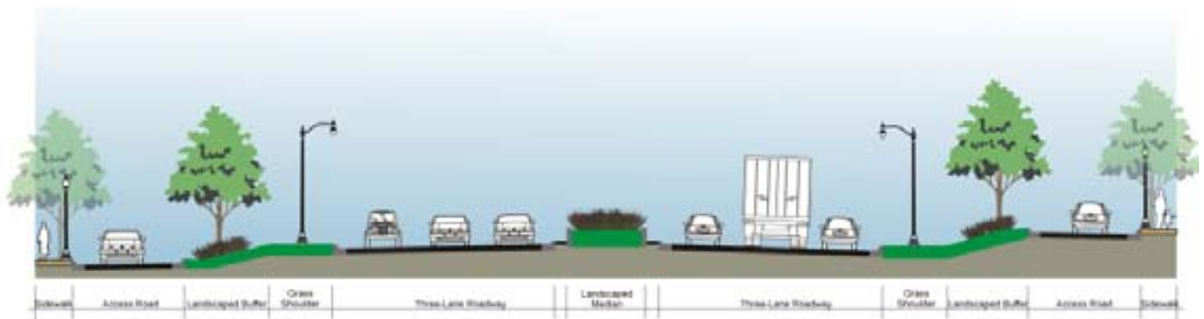

Figure 4.6: Cross-Section located between South Capitol Street and Eastern Avenue (Three lane Kenilworth Avenue with landscaping between the mainline and service lanes, and a landscaped median.)

4.2 Vehicular Circulation

Kenilworth serves an important role as a commuter link between the Maryland suburbs and the Washington, DC business core. However, the corridor does not serve the adjacent communities well. Neighborhoods on either side are isolated by the roadway which provides only limited access to or from them. Reflected in the age of the facility are substandard features which make driving the roadway and navigating some of the inter-changes and ramps unsafe.

Improve Safety along the Corridor

The corridor, and in particular, those sections between East Capitol Street and Eastern Avenue, have higher-than-average accident rates owing in part to the large number of vehicles entering and exiting Kenilworth Avenue combined with the large volume of through commuter traffic. Merge and diverge distances are inadequate and do not meet current design standards. Acceleration and deceleration lanes are too short and average speeds are in excess of the posted limits, contributing to unsafe conditions.

Reducing the infrastructure footprint of Kenilworth Avenue to two lanes in each direction will allow the above deficiencies to be corrected and will have a calming affect on traffic. However, this could substantially increase travel times through he corridor. The re-construction of the Nannie Helen Burroughs interchange requires a long-term lane closure in both directions of Kenilworth Avenue and provides a unique opportunity to evaluate whether or not a two-lane solution can be implemented as a near-term improve-ment through observation of real-time traffic conditions during reconstruction of this bridge.

Kenilworth Avenue was designed with a number of short on- and off-ramps not neces-sarily associated with a particular interchange but used to access the parallel service roads. To improve safety, these ramps will be consolidated or combined with traffic move-

Figure 4.7: Vehicular Circulation Framework Plan

ments to and from the existing interchanges. The adjacent service roads will be narrowed and bulb-outs, or curb extensions, introduced to reduce the roadway width, protect on-street parking, and reduce crossing distances for pedestrians. Improving signage will also improve safety.

At Benning Road, major safety improvements will be undertaken in two phases. Interchange modifications will improve safety for vehicles exiting Kenilworth Avenue to westbound Benning Road and for eastbound Benning Road traffic entering northbound on Kenilworth Avenue.

The ultimate configuration for Benning Road will divide the existing structure into two independent bridges, and depress the northbound lanes of Kenilworth Avenue similar to the way the southbound lanes are depressed. This will allow Benning Road to pass over the northbound lanes before intersecting with the on- and off-ramps from Kenilworth Avenue. These ramps would become right-lane movements, thereby creating a safer condition for drivers exiting or entering the corridor from Benning Road.

Dividing the bridge will allow traffic movements to and from Benning Road to move to the interior lanes and allow a safer crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists using the bridges to travel from 34th Street to Minnesota Avenue.

Improve Accessibility to Neighborhoods along the Corridor

There is limited access along the corridor to and from adjacent neighborhoods and to destinations beyond. Access across the corridor is also limited. Where access is provided, the ability to access directions northbound and southbound on Kenilworth Avenue is not always available and from the east, very limited. Where access is provided, it is primarily focused on moving vehicles between points to the west and points to the north. Several interchange improvements are proposed in this plan to enhance connectivity.

At East Capitol Street and Kenilworth Avenue, movements are limited to and from Kenilworth Avenue to eastbound and southbound traffic. Several improvements will gradually enhance access for westbound and northbound traffic which can be implemented through three projects.

For westbound traffic, interchange improvements will allow vehicles to enter Kenilworth Avenue and go southbound or northbound. With implementation of additional enhancements which build on the previous effort, northbound traffic will have the ability to go eastbound or westbound and southbound traffic will be able to go eastbound.

With implementation of the third improvement, all of the above movements will be implemented and enhanced accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclist will be added to the interchange.

Beginning in the vicinity of Benning Road, Kenilworth Avenue will be depressed to allow for improved connections across the corridor. The ultimate build-out for the Benning Road interchange will include a depressed northbound Kenilworth Avenue and new cross corridor connections for Benning Road.

Kenilworth Avenue will be depressed just north of Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue as far north as Douglas Street to allow for a new cross-corridor connection at Nash Street. The new Nash Street crossing will initially connect the two service roads and improve access to and from the neighborhoods west of Kenilworth Avenue. As part of any transit oriented development between Polk Street, the CSX Railroad, and Kenilworth Avenue, extend Olive Street south and complete the connection to the new Nash Street crossing.

Improve Accessibility to the Anacostia Parks and Riverfront

There is limited access throughout the corridor to parkland west of Kenilworth Avenue. Enhancements throughout the corridor will improve access to these recreational areas and a new Park Road will allow drivers to traverse the parkland from north to south.

At Eastern Avenue, there is potential for a new pedestrian and bicycle access point at the western leg of the intersection. This new connection could extend west from the intersection and connect to Anacostia Avenue.

West of the river, a new Park Road could connect Benning Road and Barney Circle and provide new access to parkland along the west bank of the Anacostia. This new Park Road would be parallel to the riverfront and also connect to the JFK Access Road and, depending on the final alignment, connect to the Reservation 13 Circle.

A new connection across the river could be built along an extended Massachusetts Avenue alignment. The new bridge could provide access across the river for pedestrians, bicyclist, and National Park Service vehicles used to maintain the park. It might also provide access for public vehicles using the new Park Road.

4.3 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Several factors play a key role in determining how well an area functions for pedestrians and bicyclists. These include the location of destinations, quality of sidewalks and other facilities, safety and comfort relative to motor vehicles, security from crime, and physical barriers to pedestrian and bicycle access. To influence and improve the pedestrian and bicycle circulation system within the Kenilworth Avenue Corridor study area, the following strategies are recommended:

Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Across Kenilworth Avenue

Kenilworth Avenue is a significant obstacle to east-west pedestrian and bicycle movement, with access limited to five locations along the 4.5 mile corridor. Improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation in the area requires upgrading the quality of existing crossings and adding new connections across Kenilworth Avenue.

Under the current plan, the existing crossings at East Capital Street, at Benning Road, at Hayes Street adjacent to the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail Station, at Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue, and at Eastern Avenue, are proposed to be improved. In addition, three new pedestrian crossings are proposed across Kenilworth Avenue: a new connection is proposed below Kenilworth Avenue to connect the Twinning neighborhood and Anacostia Park; a new interchange design is recommended between East Capitol Street and Kenilworth Avenue that will provide pedestrian access below Kenilworth Avenue; and, a new street connection is proposed at Nash or Ord Street, where Kenilworth Avenue would be depressed, to allow an at-grade pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular crossing.

Of the three pedestrian bridges located between Nannie Helen Burroughs and Eastern Avenue, the two southern bridges do not get much use and need further study to determine whether these should be replaced or removed. The third pedestrian bridge, at Douglas Street

Figure 4.8: Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Framework Plan

adjacent to the Deanwood Metrorail Station, is proposed to be replaced with an improved crossing.

Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety, Security, and Access to Key Destinations

The study area includes several key destinations that are located near the Kenilworth Avenue Corridor. These include the Anacostia waterfront, including the Anacostia Park and Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens; the Minnesota Avenue and Deanwood Metrorail Stations; elementary, middle and high schools; federal and city managed parks; and the commercial area along Minnesota Avenue.

A survey of current pedestrians and bicyclists established that heavy traffic, fast moving traffic, and difficult street crossings were the most significant barriers to walking and bicycling in the corridor. Maintenance issues such as pot holes, sidewalk cracks, faded street lines and crosswalks, were also cited as obstacles to pedestrian/bicycle circulation.

To improve these conditions, the following recommendations are proposed within the study area:

- Construct the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the trail by making connections, such as extending the Watts Branch Trail under Kenilworth Avenue to meet the Riverwalk Trail.
- Provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle access through neighborhoods and along major streets by improving sidewalks, adding bicycle lanes on key roadways, and improving bike route signage.
- Improve the safety and convenience of roadway crossings by marking crosswalks clearly, installing and reconstructing curb ramps, providing pedestrian signal heads and push buttons, and adding traffic calming measures, such as curb extensions and median crossing islands.
- Improve the security of pedestrians and bicyclists by adding more lights and providing a greater law enforcement presence around bridges and tunnels.

4.4 Summary of Projects

Improvements to the Kenilworth Avenue Corridor will take place over time through the implementation of a series of projects aimed to achieve the policies and actions described in this chapter. A summary of these projects is illustrated on Figure 4.4 and categorized based on the anticipated time, planning and budget that will be required to undertake these. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide a detailed explanation of these projects.

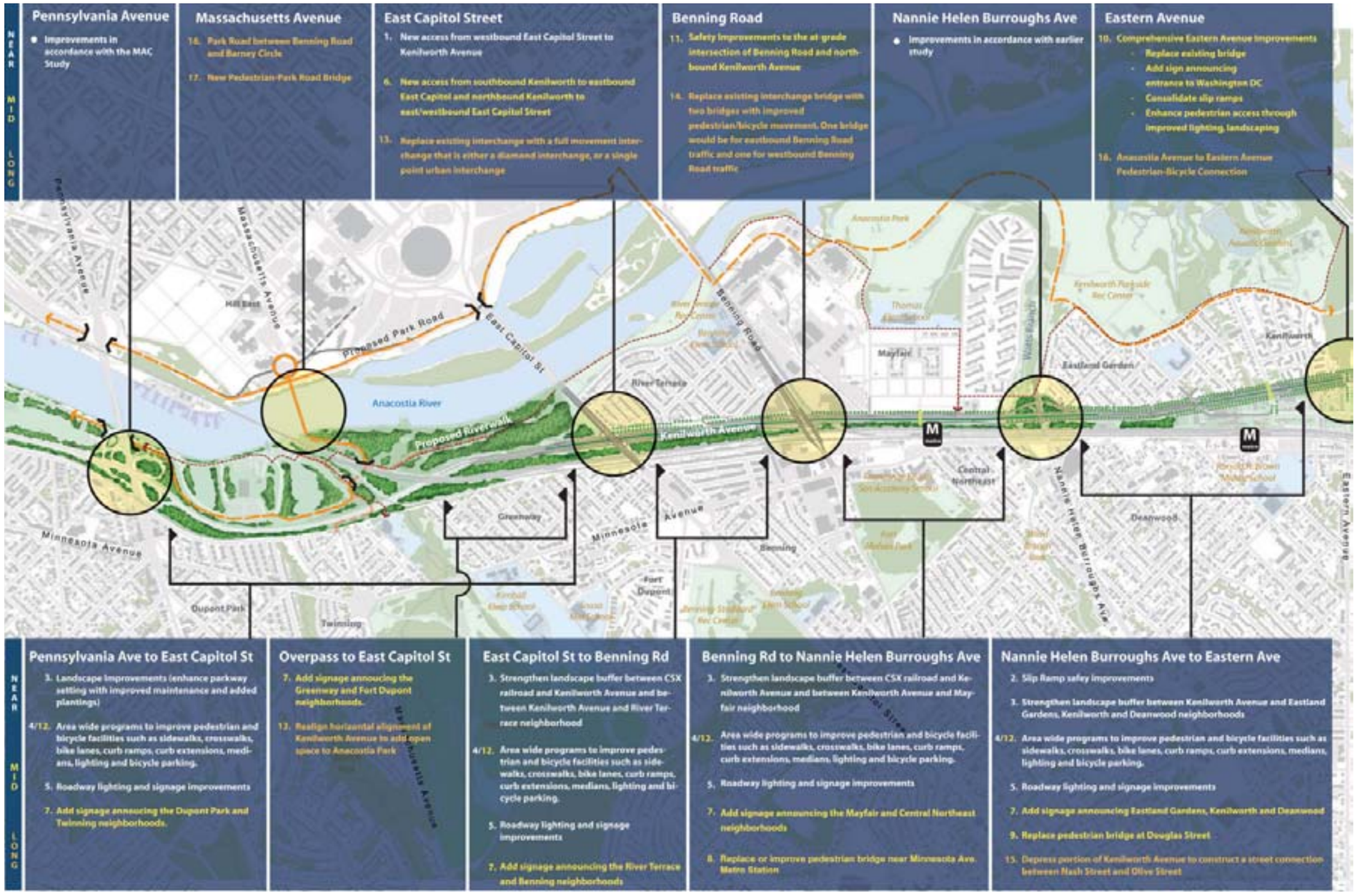

Figure 4.9: Summary of Projects (Short-term - white; Mid-term - yellow; Long-term - orange)
Note: Project numbers correspond to projects discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

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